

Preliminary Report

Citizen Summit III

November 15, 2003

Washington Convention Center



More than 2,800 residents of the District of Columbia gathered on November 15 at the Washington Convention Center to help plan the future of the city. Over the course of the day-long forum, participants in Citizen Summit III discussed their long-term vision for the future of the District and weighed trade-offs between policy options to address critical challenges facing the city.

Citizen Summit III was convened by Mayor Anthony Williams and attended by several members of the City Council, including Council Chairman Linda Cropp, and numerous ANC Commissioners. The results of Citizen Summit III will be used by Mayor Williams to develop the Citywide Strategic Plan, which sets out the programs and services that will be put in place by government agencies. Results will shape budget priorities for the 2005 city budget.

Citizen Summit III is part of Mayor Williams' Neighborhood Action initiative to engage the public in the city's governance. Over the past four years, Neighborhood Action has engaged more than 10,000 people in setting the city's priorities.



Thousands of citizens came together at Citizen Summit III to plan the city's future. People from all 8 wards discussed how the administration should address issues of education, safety and expanding opportunities for residents of the District.

Who Attended Citizen Summit III?

Neighborhood Action sought to represent the city's diversity. Participants' demographics are compared below to the city's make up.

Gender	Nov. 15	Actual
Female	68%	53%
Male	32%	47%

Age		
17 and under	7%	20%
18-24	5%	13%
25-34	10%	18%
35-44	14%	15%
45-54	18%	13%
55-64	16%	9%
65 and better	30%	12%

Household Income		
Less than \$25,000	33%	32%
\$25,000 - 49,999	24%	27%
\$50,000 - 74,999	17%	16%
\$75,000 - 99,000	11%	9%
\$100,000 - 149,999	9%	8%
\$150,000 - 199,999	7%	8%

Have a Disability		
Yes	27%	
No	73%	

Ethnicity		
Hispanic	11%	8%
Non-Hispanic	89%	92%

Race	Nov. 15	Actual
African-American	58%	60%
Asian/Pacific Islander	10%	3%
Caucasian	16%	31%
Native American	0%	0.3%
Mixed Race	8%	2%
Other Race	4%	4%
Prefer Not to Answer	4%	-

Sexual Orientation		
Identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender		
Yes	9%	
No	91%	

Geography		
Ward 1	15%	13%
Ward 2	10%	12%
Ward 3	7%	13%
Ward 4	14%	13%
Ward 5	16%	13%
Ward 6	11%	12%
Ward 7	12%	12%
Ward 8	10%	12%
Non-Resident	6%	-

Real Challenges, Real Choices

Participants in Citizen Summit III were asked to consider programs and policies that address three of the most important challenges facing the city:

- Providing quality education
- Making neighborhoods safer
- Expanding opportunities for our residents

In small groups, citizens worked with trained facilitators to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the different options that had been presented to them, as well as identify other options.

Ideas generated in these discussions were collected through laptop computers at each table. Participants also used polling keypads to prioritize the options and shape how the city uses its resources to address the challenges.



Participants at Table 199 discuss options to expand job, housing and health care opportunities for District residents.

Providing Quality Education

Five options for improving the quality of education in the District were presented to participants. In addition, a sixth option emerged from the table discussions: make schools safer for learning.

Several strong themes emerged. Participants liked the breadth of the options and strongly supported the idea of providing “wrap around” services, noting that “education starts with family” and the importance of taking “a holistic approach” to education. They also thought we should improve the quality of our teachers and focus on early childhood education. Participants suggested that we should use our school buildings to support non-traditional learning opportunities, such as adult and senior education and vocational training.

Attendees wanted to know how the District defines teacher quality and how we would assure that early childhood education prepared children for school. They were also concerned about the finances of the school system. On one hand, they said it is important to offer competitive pay for teachers. On the other hand, they said spending more money would not fix all of the schools’ problems. They were also concerned that schools need more parental involvement as well as more partnerships with local universities, social organizations and businesses.

Citizens were also asked to prioritize the options for improving education. The top three priorities were:

1. Make schools safer;
2. Improve the quality of teaching; and
3. Provide “wrap around” social services to students.

Making Neighborhoods Safer

Participants were also presented with five options for making neighborhoods safer in the District. A sixth option developed during the discussion: strengthen relationships between the community and the police.

During the table discussions, several themes surfaced around public safety options. Attendees strongly supported reforming the juvenile justice system and reducing neighborhood blight—because “early intervention is prevention.” People also encouraged more community responsibility, suggesting that the city should “involve kids and families in keeping their neighborhoods clean.”

Citizens called for a visible and responsive connection between officers and neighborhoods, a need to strike a balance between enforcement and community policing. While some supported enforcement of low-level crimes, others were concerned about the consequences that approach might have on community policing efforts. Similarly, while many residents supported focusing additional police attention on “hot spots,” others worried that some areas wouldn’t receive enough attention, or that certain neighborhoods would be stigmatized.

Participants were also asked to prioritize the options for making neighborhoods safer. The top three priorities were:

1. Reform the juvenile justice system;
2. Strengthen relationships between community and police; and
3. Focus enforcement and services on high-risk populations and ex-offenders to prevent a return to crime.

Expanding Opportunities for Our Residents

Job Opportunities and Housing

Participants were presented with three options each for expanding access to jobs and access to housing in the District. Citizens identified additional options in each area: create access by increasing the minimum wage to a living wage, and create housing opportunities for middle income and working class residents.

Attendees strongly supported all of the job options, noting their connection to each other. People said training needs to be relevant to jobs (through apprenticeships and vocational training), and the District needs to expand literacy programs because “literacy is a gateway to employment.” It is important to bring new jobs to DC and validate the importance of entry-level jobs because “people need incentives” to succeed.

Citizens also strongly supported the need for affordable housing and housing for persons with special needs. In particular, citizens require more training and information on how to access housing assistance, and affordable housing should be distributed across every ward of the city.

Participants were asked to prioritize the options for job and housing opportunities. The top priorities for jobs were to create access to jobs by supporting a living wage and strengthen the job apprenticeship system. Top housing priorities were to support the development of affordable housing units and increase housing opportunities for middle income and working class residents.

Health Care

Participants were presented with five options for expanding access to health care in the District. Citizens strongly support the need to expand health care for the uninsured and for seniors. In addition, many emphasized the need for substance abuse treatment: “Many of the city’s problems are multifaceted, but few don’t have a link to substance abuse. We need to solve the problem, not the symptom.”

Residents are concerned that the Health Care Alliance is not working, and that we need better distribution of healthcare clinics, especially in Southeast and East of the River. They also want more coordination between drug treatment, housing, mental health, drug use prevention services, and the correction systems.

The top health care priorities were:

1. Expand healthcare for the uninsured; and
2. Plan for expanded services for the aging population.

Budget Trade Offs

After they had spent half the day reviewing and evaluating the array of options presented to address the challenges of education, public safety and opportunities for all residents, participants were asked to make budget trade offs between the options. Participants were asked to determine which options they would vote for given a budget of \$60 million.

The following list of options is presented in the order of importance that participants gave them given limited resources (from most important to least important).

1. Expand health care for the uninsured
2. Support the development of affordable housing units
3. Strengthen the job apprenticeship system
4. Expand adult literacy programs
5. Add more officers citywide with special focus on “hot spots”
6. Reform the juvenile justice system
7. Provide focused support for low-income youth between the ages of 13-24
8. Begin the education process early in childhood
9. Improve the quality of teaching
10. Accelerate the renovation of schools by consolidating underused facilities
11. Plan for expanded services for the aging population
12. Provide “wrap around” social services to students
13. Reduce neighborhood blight
14. Provide tax relief
15. Increase hiring of District residents by government contractors
16. Develop housing for residents with special needs
17. Focus enforcement and services on high-risk populations and ex-offenders
18. Expand housing production to support growth of DC population
19. Expand substance abuse treatment and prevention
20. Increase prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS
21. Increase enforcement of low-level crimes
22. Reduce cases of infant mortality and cases of low birth-weight babies

Complete results from Citizen Summit III will be available in the coming weeks at the Neighborhood Action web site: www.neighborhoodaction.dc.gov.

Vision for An Inclusive City

The last item on the Summit agenda was a presentation of a Draft Vision for Washington's future. The overarching goal of the Vision is to grow a more inclusive city, in which the benefits of growth are spread more evenly and the city's strengths are leveraged to bridge social, physical, and economic divides. After the Mayor provided a 20-minute presentation, citizens were asked how important the goal of an inclusive city was to them. As Chart 1 indicates, 61% said it should be the city's highest priority. Chart 2 further shows that 71% felt the Vision was on target or mostly on target.

Chart 1: How Important Do You Believe It Is To Create An Inclusive City?

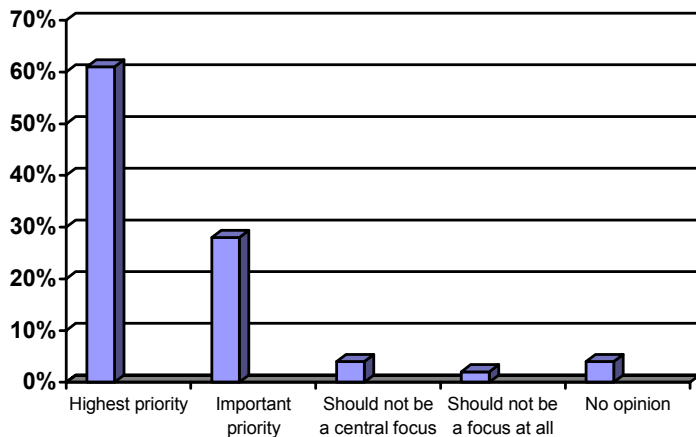
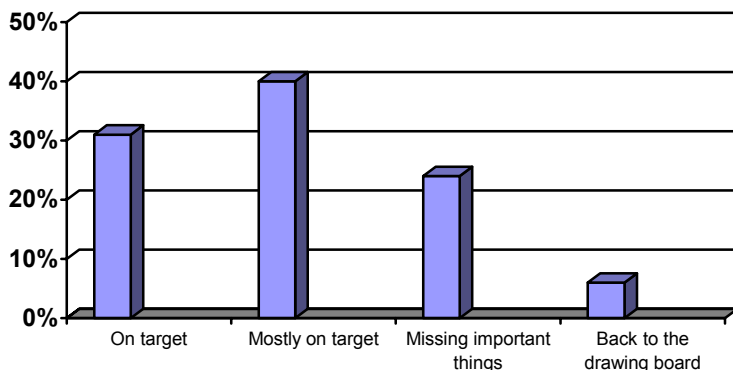


Chart 2: Does The Vision Face Up To The City's Toughest Issues?



Three challenges for growing a more inclusive city were outlined in the presentation, each accompanied by preliminary strategies. For each challenge, participants were asked to state what strategies they liked, and what they thought was missing.

The Vision's first challenge is *Creating Successful Neighborhoods*. Overall, participants **liked** the strategies to create "community anchors" (neighborhood centers). They also liked the focus on public transportation, pedestrian areas, and schools as points of contact for the neighborhoods. There was also support for the concept of restoring and reinvigorating neighborhoods, rather than tearing down and starting over. Participants stated that **what was missing** was stronger discussion of health care facilities, recreation centers and libraries, and more focus on the area east of the Anacostia River. While many agreed that we should celebrate the uniqueness of our neighborhoods, some stated that the emphasis should be to unify rather than to emphasize boundaries.

The Vision's second challenge is *Access to Education and Jobs*. Overall, participants **liked** the strategies to increase partnerships between our K-12 schools and our universities, institutions, and businesses. Participants also liked the idea of linking a larger share of local jobs to DC residents. Participants stated that **what was missing** was more discussion of the need for parking to attract retail and other development to the city. Another concern was to make sure that new job opportunities included high-paying, high-skilled jobs as well as low-level service jobs.

The Vision's third challenge is *Connecting the Whole City*, with a focus on physical connections across the city. Overall, participants **liked** the proposed light rail system, and proposals for more parks and green space. Participants stated that **what was missing** was a discussion of human and economic connections, as well as physical connections. Some observed that connections must be multi-directional and must occur on several levels—between neighborhoods, between downtown and the rest of the city, and between the city and the region.